



# Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET, SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

February 21, 2017

To: Senator Catherine Osten, Co-chair Appropriations Committee  
Senator Paul Formica, Co-chair Appropriations Committee  
Representative Toni Walker, Co-chair Appropriations Committee

The new **section 27 of proposed HB 7050** would require Simsbury to reimburse the state for a portion of the contributions to the teachers' retirement system in the amount of \$3,634,442 for FY2017-18. To put the magnitude of this new expense into perspective, the last 4 years of Simsbury BOE operating budget increases combined total \$3,738,457.

The Simsbury Boards of Selectman, Education, and Finance work cooperatively to manage our pension obligations for our non-certified BOE, General Government, and Police employees. We collectively bargain these Town pension plans and pay the entire actuarially required contribution (ARC) to work toward fully funding our obligations. Our total ARC payments in FY2017-18 for these plans will be \$2,605,690. Adding the \$3,634,442 proposed portion of the state's ARC would more than double spending on pensions – an increase in excess of 139%. We believe that it is an unfair burden to surprise Towns and Boards of Education with a new obligation related to a state-wide pension system for which we have not been part of the management process.

We would ask you to eliminate this new section from the budget and allow Towns and Boards of Education to address the other losses of state revenue that are proposed in the Governor's budget proposals.

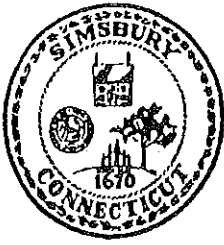
Sincerely,

Lisa Heavner, First Selectman

Tara Donahue Willerup, BOE Chairman

Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent of Schools

CC: Senator Witkos  
Representative Hampton  
Board of Selectmen  
Board of Education  
Board of Finance



# Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET, SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

February 21, 2017

To: Senator Catherine Osten, Co-chair Appropriations Committee  
Senator Paul Formica, Co-chair Appropriations Committee  
Representative Toni Walker, Co-chair Appropriations Committee

**Section 8 of proposed HB 7035** would significantly change the way special education is funded in Connecticut. While the Simsbury BOE would receive an additional \$1,096,010 in special education grant revenue, overall Education Cost Sharing (ECS) general fund revenue to Simsbury would be cut by \$2,019,621. The net result to Simsbury of the elimination of the excess cost grant and reduction of ECS would be a decrease of \$923,611.

The current excess cost reimbursement for particularly high-cost students has a certain fairness to it in that it offsets a portion of the students with the highest costs (typically outplacements) which can fluctuate from year to year. We have little control over the students that move into Simsbury with special needs and Simsbury has taken pride as a community in meeting the needs of its special education students.

The new special education cost grant formula would take into account all of our special education spending from the prior year, but reimburses districts based on a sliding scale of adjusted equalized net grand list per capita. Based on our most recent audited special education costs in FY2015-16, Simsbury spent \$14,874,265 on special education or 21.22% of all spending. Our proposed grant of \$2,080,010 for FY2017-18 would represent nearly 14% of those expenditures.

What is important for us is that the reimbursement % of special education grant funding be consistent. Simsbury's special education enrollment has been increasing in recent years, while regular education enrollment has been decreasing. Since FY2011-12, special education spending has increased 25.61%, while regular education spending has increased 2.23% based on our audited ED001 financial reports to the State Department of Education. It is imperative that Simsbury not continue to lose more educational aid and we would ask you to support a stable funding system that takes into account the needs of the students and not just the wealth of the community.

Sincerely,

Lisa Heavner, First Selectman

Tara Donahue Willerup, BOE Chairman

Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent of Schools

CC: Senator Witkos  
Representative Hampton  
Board of Selectmen  
Board of Education  
Board of Finance